(ii) 146 coal mine blocks have been identified for allocation for captive mining. Out of these, 86 coal blocks have been allotted/decided for allocation to different consumers and more are under process.

(iii) State and Central Government companies are being allotted coal mining blocks without restriction of captive mining.

(iv) Exploration for new coal blocks has been expedited.

(v) Procedure for project approvals has been streamlined.

(vi) Ministry of Power has been advised to import about 14 million - tonnes of Coal during 2005-06.

Decontrol of Coal Prices

3131. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decontrolled the prices of coal mined by Coal India Limited and its subsidiary companies;

(b) if so, the steps being taken by Government to safeguard the interest of the company; and

(c) the details of the benefits accruing to the State Governments as a result of this decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYAN RAO): (a) and (b) The prices of coal have been fully deregulated with effect from 1.1.2000. The Colliery Control Order, 2000 empowers coal companies to fix the coal prices taking into account the market forces, average cost of production and other relevant factors. Further, it has been decided that the Tariff Commission will be involved in pricing of coal for the power sector and to suggest modalities for pricing of coal for other sectors.

(c) Wherever the state taxes leviable on coal are assessed on ad-valorem basis, the buoyancy of revenue from such taxes would be dependant upon the nature of changes in the prices of coal.